1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

755 757 The first part of the most common treatment consisted of steaming the sick man, a practice which may have had a magical significance. A ditch, as long as a man, was dug in the ground. Heated stones were scattered in the bottom and covered with a thick layer of banana leaves and grass upon which the patient was laid. Heat and steam were believed to have a favorable action upon his health. After the steaming, the *ivi-atua* completed the cure. First he entered the sick man's hut and stayed there for a long time, trying to learn which spirit had entered the patient. He then held a mysterious conversation with the god or demon who had taken possession of the man's body. This interview was considered very beneficial to the patient. If the demon proved reluctant to leave the sick man, the *ivi-atua* conducted a violent expulsion. The hut was closed; sometimes it was covered with a net. The *ivi-atua* chased the demon and, taking up the clothes of the sick man, he shouted, "Light a fire." Holding the object in which the demon was supposed to be, he ran toward the fire and threw his bundle into it. He remained beside the hearth until everything was burned; then he returned to his patient and said to him, "Now you are in good health." In a severe case the *ivi-atua* might burn the house. He stayed near the fire trying to capture the demon or to keep it in the flame. If, despite all his efforts, the patient died, death was attributed to another spirit (*akuaku*) who had taken possession of him. The *ivi-atua* received food and carved objects of wood as reward for his services.

757 The medical art included much knowledge and many practices which were efficient aids in healing, and probably was far richer than our present information shows. Massage was used on tired people. Thomson (215, p. 571) tells that during his trip around the island he fell down completely exhausted several times. He yielded " . . . to the dexterous kneadings and frictions and palmings and pinchings of those skilled in the treatment," and adds that " . . . the hardfisted native is by no means gentle in the operation, but with palms and knuckles vigorously tests every muscle and tendon, as well as every joint of the vertebrae, until the exhausted patient sinks into a state of oblivious somnolence." A most popular method of removing stomach pains, especially those produced by starvation, was to bind a cord tightly around the waist. Another method was to pile on the stomach a large heap of stones. This [846] treatment is similar to that practiced by Easter Island women after childbirth in which they pressed their wombs with stones to prevent the formation of folds (121, p. 660).

278 The Easter Island pharmacopoeia was probably small. The flora of the island is extremely poor and I doubt if there are many plants with medical virtues. The present natives, when asked about their local drugs, mentioned only the introduced bamboo (*kohe*), which is said to be good for toothache when boiled or roasted and placed on the aching tooth. Thomson (215, p. 471) writes: "The thistle is bruised and applied to sores and ulcers, arrow-

10: Cooke D-5 (1886) 1899
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

being the case, it may readily be conceived that when the mission was removed from the island and the father was compelled to bid farewell to his simple-minded, but loving and faithful, Rapa Nui friend the parting must have been a sad and painful one. In the ten years which have elapsed since that time Chief Mati has never forgotten his well-beloved son, the priest, and whenever, which is only at very long intervals, a white man arrives at the island Mati's first thought is to inquire the tidings of his far-away friend. On the first occasion when my associate, Dr. Whitaker, in company with Mr. Salmon, who had previously advised the doctor on the subject, called on Mati, the latter, now over fourscore and ten, confident that the doctor came from the priest's country and must necessarily know him, immediately began to inquire regarding him; if he was well and happy; if he still loved and remembered him. When the doctor, in order to humor and gratify the old man, wove a harmless and ingenious, but fictitious, narrative about the priest, in which he highly commended Mati, the latter groaned dismally, contorted his face, and wept like a child. Seeing this, his poor old wife approached her husband, laid her arm on his shoulder, looked up in his face a moment, and then, after a series of mournful grimaces, bowed her head on her arm and, in the abandon of grief, groaned and cried aloud. Then everyone among the Rapa Nuiis present, taking the cue from the old lady, lifted up their voices in chorus and for a time it fairly rained salt tears. The groans were dismal and the cries pitiful, so that the most callous might easily have been moved to compassion.

On another occasion the doctor was asked to see a little girl who was suffering with a cervical abscess. The usual crowd of men, women, and children was present. Had the doctor informed them in advance of what he intended doing they never would have consented to the proceeding. Quietly seating himself, he gently and unconcernedly drew the child toward him and, placing her head between his knees, drew from his pocket an abscess knife. That started the concert. The minute they saw it, and divined that he was going to cut the child, groans and lamentations and expressions of sympathy for the little one could be heard on all sides. Quickly incising the abscess the puss spurted and ran in a stream, whereupon the audience howled with renewed energy, curiosity having produced a temporary lull, and for a time the situation was interesting and entertaining to a degree. The child, who had scarcely felt the blade, and scared by the din about her, must needs pipe her little tune and join with the others. As soon as they saw that the child had not been harmed and understood the object of the apparent cruelty their demonstrations were just as pronounced in the other direction and they manifested their delight and gratification in expressions of joy, and peals of hysterical laughter, and were prepared to mount the doctor on a platform, so to speak, then and there.

As with all the natives throughout the South Sea islands, the Rapa Nui is undeniably, and very decidedly, averse to hard work. He delights